

1 December 2015

## NSW emergency departments face increase in demand

The number of people visiting emergency departments in NSW increased by more than 21,000 this quarter compared to the same time last year, according to a new report from the Bureau of Health Information (BHI).

*Hospital Quarterly* provides a regular snapshot of activity and performance in NSW public hospitals, with this edition focussing on July to September 2015.

"During the quarter, nearly 650,000 patients attended emergency departments in NSW. This means emergency departments across the state received, on average, 1,600 more patients every week compared to the same time in 2014," Dr Levesque said.

"In these busy emergency departments, there were an additional 5,000 patients needing treatment in the 'emergency' category and an additional 12,000 patients needing treatment in the 'urgent' category, compared to the same time last year.

"The report shows there were nearly 475,000 hospital admissions during the quarter, which is the highest number ever reported by BHI."

Key emergency department performance findings include:

- The percentage of patients arriving by ambulance who had their care transferred to hospital staff within 30 minutes increased two percentage points to 82%
- The time that patients waited to start treatment in the emergency department on average was one minute longer or unchanged across all urgency categories
- The time patients spent in the emergency department on average was three minutes longer and is now two hours and 52 minutes
- The percentage of patients who left the emergency department within four hours of presentation dropped one percentage point to 70%, compared to 71% during the same quarter last year.

The report shows there were 56,500 elective surgeries performed, which is 3% less than the same time last year. A decline in volumes of elective surgery was seen in all urgency categories.

Across NSW, the percentage of patients who received elective surgery on time was unchanged at 97% this quarter. Almost all urgent and semi-urgent elective surgery and 95% of non-urgent surgery was performed on time.

"While the majority of patients received their surgery within clinical guidelines, on average there has been an increase in the amount of time patients wait for non-urgent surgery. This quarter, half of patients waited 32 weeks or more for non-urgent surgery, which is five days longer than the same time last year," Dr Levesque said.

Five years of detailed results for more than 80 public hospitals in NSW are available on BHI's online interactive portal *Healthcare Observer* at [bhi.nsw.gov.au/healthcare\\_observer](http://bhi.nsw.gov.au/healthcare_observer)

**SPOKESPERSON: Dr Jean-Frederic Levesque** Chief Executive, Bureau of Health Information

**MEDIA CONTACT: Rohan Lindeman** (02) 9464 4452 or 0408 472 625